

Health into Retirement Webinar FAQs (March 16, 2011)

Please remember that CalPERS is governed by the Public Employee's Retirement Law and these statements are general. The Retirement Law is complex and subject to change. If there is a conflict between the law and this document, any decision will be based on the law and not this document.

Why do I have to re-enroll if I retire within 30-120 days after I leave my job?

You have to re-enroll because of what happens when you separate from employment. You have to separate from employment in order to retire – in other words, there's a break in your employment which causes a break in your health coverage. Beyond 30 days from separation, your plan is just cancelled.

When can I find out how much my employer will pay for my health plan?

The amount of the State contribution for state/CSU retirees is published during Open Enrollment. The amounts paid by School and Public Agency employers is updated by the end of the current calendar year – sometimes it takes a little longer. If you need to know, contact your former employer

I'm thinking of moving out of CA this year – tell me again what I have to do.

Check out your potential new zip code on the Eligibility Zip Code Search Tool on the CalPERS web page to see what plans are available through CalPERS in your new area. If you do move, call CalPERS 2-3 weeks before moving so we can make any necessary changes. Or you can call our call center and an agent will look up the zip code for you. Keep in mind that moving may affect what plan you can have PLUS getting your next retirement check on time.

OK, I'm moving to Texas – do I have to change my plan and how would I do that?

Use either the Eligibility Zip Code Search Tool on the CalPERS web page to see what plans are available through CalPERS in your new area OR call our call center and an agent will look up the zip code for you. Plan changes due to moving can be done over the phone.

I plan to travel a lot when I retire – is there anything I need to do to make sure I have coverage?

All our plans offer temporary coverage for emergencies when you are away from home. The phone number on the back of your plan card will have your customer service phone number – call them before you travel. Plan benefits are handled directly by the health plan, not CalPERS.

If I go on to a CalPERS Medicare health plan, what happens to my spouse's coverage?

Nothing – they just stay on your plan under BASIC coverage. It is common for one of you to enroll in Medicare first and later on, the other spouse enrolls.

If I'm still working and my spouse is on my plan and they are turning 65, what do we do?

You won't have to do anything. If you work for a CalPERS employer, we know you are still working and we won't bother you. Once you retire, then the spouse will have to enroll in Medicare – you will too if you are eligible.

If I give you my Medicare information on that certification form, why do you need a copy of my Medicare card?

CalPERS business process is to have proof of our member's Medicare enrollment.

Can I have Medicare in New Zealand?

No. Medicare is not recognized by other countries. You'll need to contact CalPERS with your new address. At the same time, we can process a plan change to a Basic coverage. If you return to the U.S., then you'll have to re-enroll in Medicare.

If I get laid off and then retire – can I keep my health coverage?

Yes. If you are eligible to have health into retirement, then the reason for your separation doesn't matter. You would still need to retire within 120 days of your layoff

I have a CalPERS health plan now, but if I cancel it, can I ever get it again?

Yes. Cancelling your health plan does not cancel your ELIGIBILITY to have the plan. You could come back during any Open Enrollment (OE).

Will my dental and vision benefits be the same in retirement as they are when I'm working?

What benefits the plan covers or doesn't cover is determined by the carrier or plan. CalPERS handles the enrollment and eligibility for those members who want these benefits.

I'm retired and plan to re-marry; can I add my wife's kids to my plan?

Yes. If you enter into a legal marriage and the children of the new spouse are under age 26, you may add them.

I was told I need the SSN of a dependent I want to add to my plan, but I don't have one - now what?

This happens all the time. CalPERS gives you 90 days from when we add the dependent to send in their SSN.

I'm getting a divorce – can I delete my spouse now?

Technically – yes, you may. However, if the final divorce decree says that the former spouse was to have had coverage up to the date of the divorce, you'll have to put them back on and pay for back premiums.

A little off the topic, my question is about dual coverage. I have a husband and spouse both working for two different/separate public agencies, but both are eligible for CalPERS medical. They were told they can have dual coverage under CalPERS as long as they select different health plans carriers. Is this true?

No, dual coverage is not allowed under California law.

Do state retirees pay for dental and vision benefits?

State retirees pay 100% of their vision coverage. For dental, CSU retirees receive 100% of the states' contributions. State retiree may be responsible for contributing to a portion of the premium.

If we have PERS CHOICE PPO, are we able to keep the same doctors in the preferred provider network or does everything become dependent on whether they accept Medicare?

Your provider bills Medicare for most services and your health plan pays for some services not covered by Medicare. If your doctors are preferred providers and participate in Medicare, your health plan will pay most bills for Medicare-approved services. If any of your doctors are "non-preferred providers," you will have to pay for a larger portion of your health care bills. You can find out if you will have to pay more by asking your doctors if they accept "Medicare assignment." This means that they accept the Medicare limits on fees for services and will not charge more than those limits. If the doctor accepts Medicare rates, you will not be responsible for excess charges. If your doctor does not accept Medicare rates, you must pay for any part of the bill that your plan does not cover.

What supplement plans through CalPERS are available to us and how do they differ from the Advantage Plans?

From the CalPERS main page, you can follow this path – Member Information > Health Benefits Program > CalPERS Medicare Health Plans. You can then check out the different types of Medicare health plans by viewing plan descriptions, names, addresses, and phone numbers and accessing each plan's online resources that are listed. Please note – your member status needs to be a "Member Nearing Retirement" or "Retired Member".

I am still a bit confused about how CALPERS works with MEDICARE. How do I coordinate with the two?

From the CalPERS main page, you can follow this path – Member Information > Health Benefits Program > Your CalPERS & Medicare Health Benefits > How to Coordinate Medicare & CalPERS Benefits. This will provide you with the information.

You may answer this question but I will have 18 years in two years. Under CalPERS, how much of the benefits will I have to pay vs. 20 years of service?

The amount you pay is based on your first hire date with the state. If you were hired prior to 1989 and have 18 years, you are eligible for 100% of what the state will pay towards the health premiums. If you were hired 01/01/1989 or later, then 18 years of earned service would give you 90% of what the state will pay.

My husband is in a county PERS plan and I am state. How do we determine who should be the primary or if there is any Flex Elect in retirement?

Flex Elect is not available in retirement. You should review the amount that each employer pays towards the health plan to see which would be the better choice.

What are the vesting rules for dental and vision for state retirees? Is it the same as for health benefits?

Dental and vision coverage is offered as a benefit to state retirees. The program is administered by the Department of Personnel Administration (DPA). You will need to contact them directly for information on vesting requirements.

If a retiree moves overseas, such as to New Zealand, will he/she be covered by any health plan?

CalPERS offers Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plans that are available worldwide.

It is difficult to tell how much, if any, of this information applies to me as a school employee. It seems that all of it must come from my employer. Correct?

For dental, vision, health vesting and the amount of the employer contribution towards health, please contact your employer. For eligibility and enrollment for health, please contact CalPERS.

I am currently on a CalPERS health plan. What am I required to do, with respect to Medicare, if I plan to retire before I am Medicare eligible at 65?

Nothing. You would stay on the basic plan until you are eligible for Medicare, then you would go on the supplemental plan.

My child lives at a college outside the area covered by my HMO. Is she covered by my plan?

HMOs are only available in limited coverage areas. If a covered member or dependent needs to seek service outside of the coverage area, only emergency services would be covered. In these circumstances, where member and dependents reside in different areas, it is best for the member to change plans to a PPO so that dependents outside the area would have greater variety of benefits similar to the member's.

I will retire at 63 with 13 years of service--the state will pay 65%. Does this include my wife? If so, when I reach 65 and Medicare, will my wife be able to stay covered by the state plan?

If both of you are on your health plan then you will receive 65% of what the state pays towards the two party plan. Once you reach Medicare, you would go on the supplemental plan and your wife would stay in the basic plan.

Life Event: If moving to a zip code that is still within the plan, can I change medical plans?

Moving is a qualifying event to change your health plan, even when you stay in the same zip code.

I would like to see a benefit added to my plan coverage. How can I let someone know and have my suggestion considered?

CalPERS Health Benefits Branch negotiates with health plans on an annual basis to come out with benefit levels and cost in the current plan year. Suggestions should be placed in writing to CalPERS.

Why aren't dental/vision benefits offered to contracting agencies? Will those options be offered to contracting agencies in the future?

The dental and vision plans for state employees are administered through the Department of Personnel Administration. CalPERS offers and administers the health plan which means that it is available to any contracting agency. Dental and vision are not offered through CalPERS to any state, public agency or school members.

Is there any time that you have to show a birth certificate?

A birth certificate is required to add a step child to your health plan.

120 Days: We have a person who did not enroll in our benefits and is technically not eligible; he retired in 2001. When we called your call center, they enrolled him. So is the 120 enrollment date discretionary?

The 120 day rule applies to your retirement and separation dates. You are not required to enroll within 120 days of your retirement date. As long as the person retired within 120 days of their separation date, they don't lose eligibility to enroll even if it's a year later.